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Three Collections of Etchings by J. Alphege Brewer Donated to American Museums and Libraries

Three important institutions in the United States have recently accepted donations of etchings done by British artist James Alphege Brewer, who made his fame producing large color etchings of European cathedrals and other historical buildings damaged or threatened during WWI.

The donations, totaling more than 170 etchings, include

- a comprehensive collection of more than 130 etchings and related materials to the Archives and Distinctive Collections department of the Dinand Library of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA,
- 26 wartime etchings to the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, MO, and
- 21 etchings of architectural views to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

The etchings are a gift of Benjamin S. Dunham, a retired arts administrator and journalist, and his wife, flutist Wendy Rolfe, whose widowed great-grandmother married the artist's brother John Francis Brewer, the long-time organist of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in London, England.

James Alphege Brewer (1881-1946) was born in the Kensington section of London, England. He was the son of Henry W. Brewer, noted artist of historical architecture and prominent convert to the Catholic Church, and the grandson of scholar John Sherren Brewer, Jr., editor of the multi-volume *Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII*. His great uncle was E. Cobham Brewer, the polymath who compiled *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* and authored numerous other important reference works.

The J. Alphege Brewer Collection at Holy Cross includes etchings from every period of Brewer's career, including "West Front of Ratisbon Cathedral," thought to be his first etching exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1909, to one of his last, "Bruges (Quai de Rosaire)," dated 1939. Also represented are examples of the etchings published during WWI and some from Brewer's luminous Blue Hour series from the early 1920s.

Two of the etchings in the donation to the National WWI Museum and Memorial, dating from late 1914—the "West Front of Rheims Cathedral" and "The Rose Windows, Rheims Cathedral"—were widely reproduced by American printers during WWI and proudly hung on parlor walls in solidarity with the Allied cause and as a remembrance of the devastating cultural losses inflicted by the onslaught of war.

"Wendy and I are extremely pleased to know that Brewer's etchings will be available to future art researchers at these three distinguished locations," said Dunham. A member of the Association of Print Scholars and the Historians of British Art, Dunham created a website devoted to the artist's life and work: www.jalphegebrewer.info. His book, *Etched in Memory: The Elevated Art of J. Alphege Brewer*, was drawn from the website and published in 2021 by Peacock Press in Mytholmroyd, United Kingdom.

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Abigail Stambach, Head of Archives and Distinctive Collections at Holy Cross, said, “The J. Alphege Brewer Collection of etchings is a wonderful addition to our library. It is an excellent complement to some of our existing collections and will be a valuable resource to the Holy Cross community and other researchers.”

Christopher A. Warren, Chief Curator of the National WWI Museum and Memorial, where a selection of Brewer’s WWI etchings were exhibited in 2019-20, welcomed the donation: “The museum is honored to house Brewer’s wartime etchings. They are truly remarkable, and it’s a one-of-a-kind collection.”

Nadine Orenstein, Head of the Department of Prints and Drawings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Femke Spielberg, its Curator of Historic Ornament, Design, and Architecture, wrote, “The Met is delighted with the donation of these etchings by James Alphege Brewer. A true Monuments Man in print, Brewer was not yet represented in the collection of Drawings and Prints. The high technical complexity he aspired to make them a welcome addition to our collection.”

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